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This single chapter on business travel is excerpted from the FY 2005 Country Commercial Guide for Oman. The full text of the report is also available on this website.

Chapter 8: Business Travel

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Business Customs

While most leading businesspersons are accustomed to Western business practices, some still operate along more traditional Arab lines. A visit to Oman may involve the following: appointments will sometimes not be made until after the foreign businessperson arrives in Oman; upon arriving for an appointment, s/he may discover that others have appointments at the same time, or have arrived without one. However, a visitor should be on time, particularly for government appointments. Once the meeting begins, it may be interrupted by telephone calls. Coffee, tea, or soft drinks will probably be offered (except during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan), and should be accepted. Politeness is highly valued; blunt statements should be recast into constructive, balanced terms. Devout Muslims pray five times every day; visitors should be sensitive to hosts who break off a discussion for prayer at noon and at sunset, which falls during business hours. In dealing with one of the many Omani executives educated in the U.K. or the United States, there is little other than the “dishdasha” national dress worn by the Omanis that a visiting businessperson might find different from home. English is very widely spoken, particularly in the capital area.

Travel Advisory

As of the date of publication, there are no travel advisories in effect for Oman. However, regional advisories remain in effect. See: <http://www.travel.state.gov/>.

Visa Requirements

Business representatives who plan to visit Oman should be aware that entry into the country is strictly controlled. Visitors can obtain a visa in advance from an Omani embassy or consulate abroad, or apply for a visa upon arrival at the airport. Oman grants U.S. citizens one-month visit visas, or one-year multiple-entry visas: \$15.60 for visit visas, \$26 for multiple-entry visas. The U.S. Embassy in Muscat does not arrange visas for visiting businesspersons. A multiple entry visa is strongly recommended;

however, not all Omani diplomatic missions inform U.S. citizens of that option. The State Department's Consular Information Sheet for Oman, which includes travel advisory information, can be found at: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_991.html

U.S. Companies that require travel of foreign businesspersons to the United States should be advised that security options are handled via an interagency process. Visa applicants should go to the following links.

State Department Visa Website: <http://travel.state.gov/visa/index.html>

United States Visas.gov: <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/>

Consular Section, U.S. Embassy in Muscat: <http://www.usa.gov.om/>

Telecommunications

Oman has a well-developed telecommunications infrastructure. Omantel operates a relatively modern and efficient telephone system. Virtually all businesses have fax machines. Cellular (GSM) phones are widely used; roaming arrangements already cover the GCC, the U.S., the UK, and European countries. In addition, a second mobile phone operator (Nawras Telecom) will come on-line in 2005 and compete with Oman Mobile for subscribers. As of February 2005, Omantel is the only Internet service provider in Oman, offering dialup service and recently introduced ADSL service. International telephone access cards cannot be used in Oman, nor can collect calls be made or received. International rates are very high—\$1.30 per minute to Europe and the Western Hemisphere during peak hours. CompuServe access remains available via a British Telephone/MCI connection.

Transportation

Public transportation in Oman is not widely used, as in other countries in the region. Taxis are often not air-conditioned. Western visitors are unlikely to patronize the local, non-air conditioned bus or collective taxi system in Muscat. Outside of the capital area, public transport is rarely found off main highways.

Language

The official language of Oman is Arabic. English is widely spoken as the language of business; Swahili, Farsi, Urdu, Baluchi, Hindi, and various languages of south Asia are common.

Health

Sanitary standards for food and water are generally quite good, particularly at the major hotels. The Omani government inspects restaurants to maintain hygienic standards. The use of bottled water is recommended, particularly in the summer months. Health care in Oman is adequate and there are a number of Western or Western-educated health care providers in the Muscat area. Virtually all physicians are English-speakers, with Indian nationals predominating.

Local Time, Business Hours, and Holidays

Local holidays for 2005 include: January 22-25 (Eid al Adha), February 9 (Islamic New Year), April 9 (Birth of the Prophet), August 31 (Ascension Day), November 3-6 (Eid al Fitr), November 19-20 (Oman National Day*). These dates are approximate. Muslim religious holidays are determined by locally

observed phases of the moon. *Note: The actual date and duration of the National Day holiday is announced shortly before the holiday is to take place, and is usually about a week after the actual National Day; the holiday can last for two or three working days.

Temporary Entry of Materials and Personal Belongings

The Sultanate prohibits pornography and firearms from entering Oman. Local law limits each arriving traveler to two bottles of alcohol. Items subject to confiscation at the airport include compact discs, and video and audiocassettes. In addition, the Ministry of Information regulates the entry of magazines and newspaper editions if it takes exception to a story on Oman.

Web Resources

U.S Embassy, Muscat
<http://www.usa.gov.om/>

Travel Advisory Website
<http://www.travel.state.gov/>

Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.
<http://www.access.gpo.gov/>

Please Note: Country Commercial Guides are available to U.S. exporters on the website: <http://www.export.gov>. They can be ordered in hard copy or on diskette from the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) at 1-800-553-NTIS.

U.S. exporters seeking further recommendations for trade promotion opportunities in Israel and country-specific commercial information may also wish to visit the website of the U.S. Commercial Service in Israel <http://www.buyusa.gov/oman>

Travelers may wish to obtain the most recent travel advisory from the U.S. Department of State at www.state.gov

U.S. exporters seeking general export information/assistance or country-specific commercial information should consult with their nearest **Export Assistance Center** of the **U.S. Department of Commerce's Trade Information Center** at (800) USA-TRADE, or go to one of the following websites: www.usatrade.gov or www.tradeinfo.doc.gov

To the best of our knowledge, the information contained in this report is accurate as of the date published. However, **The Department of Commerce** does not take responsibility for actions readers may take based on the information contained herein. Readers should always conduct their own due diligence before entering into business ventures or other commercial arrangements. **The Department of Commerce** can assist companies in these endeavors.